

FOUR CONTRASTS

NO. 2548

A SERMON

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*“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.
When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:
I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.
Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life....
But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.
Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings;
neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.
I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.
Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.
I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.
Isaiah 43:1-4; 22-25*

BELOVED friends, there are many lights in which we can see sin. And our perception of sin very much depends upon the light in which we look at it. Sin is very terrible by the blaze of Sinai, when the mountain of law and terrors is altogether on a smoke. It is a dreadful thing to look at sin when God speaks in thunder and all the earth trembles before Him. It is an awful thing to see sin by the light of your dying day. More terrible still will it be to see it by the light of the judgment day.

When Abraham rose up early in the morning and looked towards Sodom, it was a lurid light that met his gaze as he saw the guilty cities blazing and smoking up towards heaven like a vast furnace. To see sin in that light is a solemn thing. But of all the lights that ever fall upon sin, that which makes it, “like itself appear,” is that which falls upon it when it is set in the light of God’s countenance. To see sin by the light of God’s love, to read its awful character by the light of the cross—beholding Christ bleeding and dying—is the way to see sin. Nothing makes us feel sin to be so vile and guilty a thing as when we realize that it was perpetrated against the God of infinite love.

I am going to speak at this time mainly concerning God’s own people. They are to be the direct object of my talk, and I want to set their sins in the light of God’s love to them. I mean, beloved, your sins and my own. Let us set our sin in the light of God’s eternal love and if the sight should break us down, so much the better. If it should send us away humbled and ashamed, so much the better. And if it should make us praise eternal love beyond anything we have ever done before, so much the better.

My one object will be to set before you the contrast between God’s action towards His people and His people’s usual action towards Him. He is all love, but I fear that some of us who love Him from the bottom of our hearts do not always show it in our lives—and we give much cause for Him to set our conduct in direct contrast to His own.

I pray, dear brethren and sisters, that your consciences may be wide awake while I am preaching, and that you will not so much listen to me as make heart-searching inquisition into your own spiritual

state, and your own behavior towards your God. I do not want so much to preach to you, as just to help you while you take the candle and the broom, and sweep the house.

There may be some piece of silver that you have lost, which you will find very speedily by that process. It may be that you will learn to love the Savior better after you have thoroughly searched yourself and seen the contrast between His action towards you and yours towards Him.

I. The first contrast lies in THE CALL.

Please open your Bibles at the first verse, and read with me—"I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name." Now read in the twenty-second verse—"But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob."

We will begin by speaking of God's call to us. God has had much converse with those of us who are His people. We are not strangers to the sound of His voice and that method of communication from God came forth toward us even before we knew anything about it, for first, *God called us out of nothing*.

See how He begins this chapter—"Thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob." Our creation is entirely due to God. An ungodly man can hardly bless God for having made him, for his end may be terrible. But you and I can bless the day of our birth and praise the Lord that we ever were created to be His sons and His daughters, and to enjoy so much as we already do of His infinite love and mercy. Blessed be God for our being, because it is followed by our well-being! Blessed be God for our first birth, because we have also experienced a second birth! We praise the Lord that ever it pleased Him to make us to be His people.

Our Lord has done more than make us, for He has educated us. He *has continued the fashioning of us*. We are still like the unfinished vessel in the potter's hands—the wheel is yet revolving and God's finger is still at work upon us, molding and shaping us as He Himself would have us to be. "Thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel."

Israel is the "formed" Jacob. By God's grace, Jacob grows into Israel. Let us think for a minute of all the sweet experiences of God's forming and fashioning touch that we have had. Sometimes it has been a rough stroke that was necessary for the molding of our clay. Only by affliction could we be made to assume the shape and pattern that the Lord had determined for us.

At other times it has been the touch of very soft fingers. Divine love and kindness and tenderness have molded us. As David said to the Lord, in his Psalm of thanksgiving, so can each true child of God say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad." He has had wonderful dealings with us in creating us and in forming us.

Think what wonderful dealings He has had, next, in *consoling us*, for the Lord goes on to say, "Fear not." Oh, how often He has cheered us up when our spirit was sinking! With the psalmist, we have been able to say, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

When it has been very dark with us, the Lord has lighted our candle. When we have been quite alone, then we have not been alone, for He has been with us. "A Syrian ready to perish," was a true description of Israel going down into Egypt, but the Lord did not leave him to perish—and He has not left us to perish, and He never will.

Friends have sometimes failed to cheer us, but our Best of friends has always comforted us. There are many who call themselves comforters, to whom we can truly say, "Miserable comforters are ye all." But what a Comforter is the God of all comfort! He knows how to comfort those that are cast down. He takes care that His comforts are given to us just as we need them and that they always come to us in the best possible way.

O beloved, the Lord has had strange dealings with some of you, which you could never tell! You could not even recount them to yourself in quiet soliloquy. You have lost, one after another, those who were dear to you, and yet you have not been permitted to sink down into despair. You have been brought into great straits, yet you have not been deserted by your God. You have been cast down, but not destroyed. You have gone through fire and through water, yet you have been brought out into a wealthy

place and your soul has had to extol the Lord who has dealt with you in lovingkindness and tender mercy.

So, you see, we have had from God the blessings of creation, formation, and consolation.

But that is not all, for the Lord has also called us and conversed with us in the matter of *redemption*. How sweetly it runs, “for I have redeemed thee.” Yes, blessed be God, whether we are poor, or sick, or obscure, we who believe in Jesus are bought with His precious blood. I would give up my eyes rather than give up that thought, “I am bought with the precious blood.”

I would give my hands, and arms, and every sense I have, sooner than give up that inward delightful confidence, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me. Upon the cross of Calvary, when He was paying down His life-price, He gave Himself a ransom for me and I am a sharer in the effectual purchase of His redeeming blood.”

Beloved, has not the Lord also told you that, sometimes, in His Word and by His Spirit? Has he not made it come home so blessedly to you that you have cried out with joy, “It is true, it is verily true, the Lord says to me, ‘I have redeemed thee’”? This is a choice way in which God has spoken to you, cheering and comforting your heart by a sense of His redeeming love.

The Lord has done even more than that for each of His children. He has given a special *nomination*—“I have called thee by thy name.” You know what your name was once, but blessed be God, He has given you a new name, and He has called you to Himself by name as much as Mary of Bethany was called, when her sister Martha said to her, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee,” or when Mary Magdalene turned herself and said, “Rabboni,” because her beloved Master had called her by her name, “Mary.”

The Lord delights to call His people by their name, just as mothers and fathers do, but specially as mothers do when they repeat the child’s pet name which they have given it—some fondling name which is the mother’s own particular register and mark upon the child. “I have called thee by thy name.”

Then comes this blessed appropriation, “Thou art mine.” Dear child of God, your Heavenly Father says to you, “Thou art mine. You do not belong to the world now, much less to the devil. You do not even belong to yourself. I have made you. I have formed you. I have consoled you. I have upheld you. I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name, you are Mine, and I will never part with you.”

This is the way that God talks to us. You recognize that divine language, do you not? You have heard it many a time. You are, perhaps, hearing it now. Then turn with me to the other side of the question—the neglected call on our part. Listen again to this sad sentence from the twenty-second verse. “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

That may not mean that there has been literally no calling upon God on your side, but it does mean that there has been too little of it. Come, brothers and sisters, let us put this matter to the test. What about *our prayers*? I have no wish to judge anybody, but I know that there are some who, I trust, do love the Lord, who have so little of the spirit of prayer that, broadly speaking, this accusation is true, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

Are there not some of you who spend only a very little time in secret prayer with God? Just a few hurried words in the morning, just a few more at night, when you are tired out and half asleep, but few, if any, exclamations all day long? Now, I consider brief, exclamatory prayer to be the very best form of prayer. I do not think that length in prayer often ministers to strength in prayer, but those breathings of the soul’s desire during the day,—

*“The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near;”*

that sigh, that “Ah!” “Oh!” “Would that!” “O God!”—that is the style of supplication which reaches the throne of God. Yet are there not some of you who forget to present these brief prayers? Thus there is

much less prayer than there ought to be, and the Lord has to say, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

Some who do, I trust, love the Lord, are very lax about prayer with their brethren and sisters. I think that, next to united praise, united prayer is the most delightful thing that can ever occupy the human mind. I do believe that our Monday evening gatherings and our other prayer meetings are among the sweetest enjoyments that Christians can have this side of heaven. Yet there are some who never come to them at all—and to them the Lord seems to address the language of the text, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

True as this is of our prayers, I am sure that it is still more true of *our praises*. How little praise, my brothers and sisters, does the Lord get from us! Our “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” we sing here, but how little of singing is there usually in our own houses! I will not blame you if you cannot sing vocally, but how little is there of that heart-music which is the very heart of music, that praising with the soul without any words, when we sit still and bless the Lord, and all that is within us magnifies His holy name.

Is there not too little of this heart-music? The revenue of praise paid into the divine exchequer is so sadly little that I am sure that the Master is robbed. We do not send in a fair estimate of our income of mercy and we do not pay unto the Lord that portion of praise that is due to Him, and therefore He is obliged to say to us, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

I will tell you what I think this sentence further means, and that is, that there are many, with whom God has dealt well, who do not venture to call upon Him for *special help in His service*. They keep plodding along the old roads and mostly in the old ruts, but they do not dare to invoke the aid of the Lord for some novel form of service, some fresh enterprise upon which they can strike out for God.

It has been my lot, in years past, to call upon God to help me in what men judged to be rash and imprudent enterprises, but oh, how grandly the Lord always answers to the holy courage of His people if they will but do and dare for Him! Yet, too often, He has to say, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob.”

I wish we would put God to the test and see what He is both able and willing to do for us and by us. There are the promises, but they are often like locked-up boxes. They lie, like that mass of coin which the German Emperor is said to be storing up in a fortress—keeping it all idle and useless—to come in handy, I suppose, one day, for blood and iron. But meanwhile, it is doing no service to anybody. Let us not keep God’s mercies locked up after that fashion, but let us utilize them wherever we can.

I am also afraid that sometimes, *in our trouble*, we do not call upon God as we should. I may be addressing a Christian here who is in deep trouble and who has in vain tried fifty ways of getting out of it, but he has not yet tried what calling upon God would do. They have in Jersey, as you may know, the habit, when they think they are being wronged, of calling, “Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro! Ha! Ro!” and straightway, having called upon the prince, according to the feudal custom, to come to their defense, all action must be stayed, for the prince is supposed to intervene to take up the quarrel of his subjects.

And it is always a wise thing, when you are getting into the deep waters of trouble, not to battle, and worry, and fret, but just to say, “O God, my God, I do invoke You! I put this case into Your hand. This man has slandered me, but I will never answer him. You shall answer for me, O God! I am being wronged, but I shall not go to law. I will bear this burden, O God, until You, who are the Judge of the oppressed, shall see fit to right me.”

Whenever Christian men can act like this in time of trouble, or in time of service, then they do well. But the Lord still has to say to many of His people, “I have been speaking to you in love, and mercy, and tenderness, but you have not called upon Me.” If this accusation touches the heart of any believer here, let him pray for forgiveness and begin, from this time on, to call upon the name of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly and more briefly, let us consider another contrast which is equally striking—upon the matter of THE CONVERSATION between the Lord and His people.

Notice, first, God's side of it, as it is given in the second verse—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior."

Now read the other side, in the twenty-second verse—"But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Notice how God is with His people *in strange places*. Wherever they are, He will not leave them. He will go right through the waters with them. God also keeps close to His people *in dangerous places*, fatal places as they seem—"When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

There is God keeping pace with His people through fire and through water, never leaving them, but ever making this cheering message to be the comfort of each one of them, "I am with thee! I am with thee! I am with thee!" Our faithful God ever keeps close to His people. Is it not perfectly wonderful how close Christ has kept to His church? Even when she had sinned, He would not leave her. When she had fallen and was ready to perish, He would not desert her.

*"'Yea,' saith the Lord, 'with her I'll go
Through all the depths of sin and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to share.'"*

He cannot be sundered from His people—to every one of them He has given the personal promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now listen to your side of this matter of converse with God—"But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Has it not been so with regard to *private prayer*? A very little of that is quite enough for you, for you soon get tired of it. You actually went to sleep, the other night, in the middle of your prayer. Was it not so? Well, I am not going to blame you too much, but it is truly sad if this is the case with you.

Is it not the same, often, with your *reading of the Scriptures*? When you have taken your Bible to read a portion, have you not had to school yourself to do it? It has been quite a task to you. Did you ever hear how Hone, the author of the *Every Day Book*, who had been an infidel, was brought to the Savior's feet?

He was in Wales, one day. He never read the Bible or thought of God, but he saw a girl, sitting at a cottage door, reading her Bible. He said, "Oh! the Bible?" "Yes, sir," she answered, "it is the Bible." He said, "I suppose you are getting your task." "Task?" she inquired. "Task?" "Yes, my dear, I suppose your mother has set you so much to read." "Mother set me so much to read?" "Yes," he replied, "I suppose you would not read the Bible else. It is a task, is it not?"

"Task?" she said, "Oh, no! I only wish I could read it all day long. It is my joy and my delight, when my work is done, to get a few minutes to read this precious Book." That simple testimony was the means of converting the infidel and of bringing him to trust the Savior for himself. I am afraid that there are many who could not have said what that girl did, for they have been weary of God's Word and weary of God Himself.

When they have come up to God's house, they have been weary of *hearing the Word*. Look at many, many, many professors. I trust that they are God's children—but oh! they like very short sermons—and if they do attend to what the preacher says, he has to be very careful to put in plenty of illustrations and striking sayings. Then they will listen, but if he does not preach so as to please them, they say, "Well, you know, it was very warm, and I could not help just dropping off into a doze." Yes, I know. I know. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," but poor Israel himself often sleeps, to his own serious loss. And the Lord has to say to him, "Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Are there not some, also, whom God loves, who get *weary of their work*? They used to be Sunday school teachers, but you see, they now live out in the country, and they want the Sabbath day's quiet, so

they cannot teach any longer. They used to preach at the corner of the street, or in a room somewhere, or do anything that they could for Christ, but they are getting old, they say, and so they must just do a little less.

They used to give generously to the cause of God, but their means are reduced, and they are obliged to draw in—so they draw in first in the matter of giving to God. They begin to pinch God's cause before they pinch themselves. So the Lord has again to say, "Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Possibly, there are some things in which each one of us has failed to take that delight in God which we ought to have taken. We have not been half so delighted with God as He has been with us. And we have not been so willing to converse with Him as He has been willing to go with us through the floods and through the flames.

III. Now, next, and very briefly indeed, I want you to notice the contrast in THE SACRIFICE.

Turn to the third verse—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." Now read in the twenty-third verse—"Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices....Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities."

Here is God giving up everybody else for the sake of His people. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were great nations, but *God did not choose the greatest*. Is it not an extraordinary thing that the Lord should ever have loved some of us? We are nothing in particular, and there are mighty men, learned men, men of rank and station, yet He has passed them by. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

That is a very wonderful declaration on God's part—"I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." That is to say, "I passed others by, and chose thee."

We may see another meaning in these words, for *God has given us His choicest gift*. Christ is infinitely more precious than Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba, though they were lands of great abundance of wealth. God had but one Son, yet He gave Him up that He might die for us and that, through His death, we might live. There can be no gift equal to this, for that Son of God was God's own self—and in the death of Christ, it was God Himself who came to earth for our redemption. Will you just try, dear child of God, to think over that great fact, for you know that it is true?

Now look at the other side. Will any of you, to whom this applies, remember the charge God here makes? "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings." I wonder how little some people really do give to God! I believe, in some cases, not as much as it costs them for the blacking of their boots.

If you were to set it all down, there are some professors whose sacrifice to God might be put—I was about to say, in their eye—but certainly they would not feel it if it were put in their mouths, for it is so little. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee; yet thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings."

Then the Lord adds, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money." Not even the smallest offering has been given to the Most High by some who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. How little is given by the most generous of us! How little even by those who live nearest to God!

As if His words ought to touch our consciences, the Lord says, "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense"—as much as to say, "I have left it entirely up to you what you would bring. I have not demanded anything, I have not fixed any rate, I have not taxed you. And this voluntary principle—has it failed? I have not put you under the law and said that you shall give just so much—I have left it wholly to your love."

I read somewhere that, in the Romish times, men were very generous, because they thought that they could purchase salvation by their alms and their gifts to the church. And it is said that the doctrine of free grace makes people stingy. I do not believe that it is so—I believe that the natural effect of grace upon any true heart is to make the man feel that, if God has done so much for him, it is his joy and his delight to do all that lies in his power for God and His cause.

At any rate, dear friends, let us be sure to make it so in our case. I am not going to press this matter upon you, but I want you to take it home to yourselves, as I take it home to myself. Let not the Lord have to say to any one of us, “I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee...but thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money.”

IV. I close with one more contrast, which refers to THE HONOR given *by* God and the honor given *to* God.

Read with me in verse four—“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” Then here is the contrast, in the twenty-third verse—“Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.” The words seem to answer to each other in the declaration of God’s love to His people and in His lamentation for the want of their love to Him.

“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.” This is a very wonderful passage, but it is blessedly true that *God gives great honor to those whom He saves*. I have known persons who, before their conversion, were unclean in their lives—men who had been everything that was despicable and women who had lost all honor—and when they have been converted, they have joined a Christian church and in the society of God’s people, they have become honorable.

They have been taken into the fellowship of the saints just as if there had never been a fault in their lives. Nobody has mentioned the past to them—it has been forgotten. If ever any professed Christian has spoken of it, it has been a disgrace to him to do so, but in the church of God in general, we take in those who have been the vilest of the vile. And if they have but new hearts and right spirits, they are our brethren and sisters in Christ, and they are honorable among us, and the Lord says to each one of them, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.”

All God’s people are honorable people, they are the true “right honorables,” for God has made them so. They are honorable as to their new nature, for that is holy and they seek after holiness. They are honorable as the sons of God, for they are of the blood royal of heaven. They are honorable as wedded to Christ, for He becomes their Husband. They are honorable because of their inheritance, for they can sing,—

*“This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home.”*

They are honorable as to their station throughout eternity, for they shall dwell forever at the right hand of God. Even those who were once so dishonorable that we could not have associated with them then, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ and God makes them honorable.

I do think that if you and I, poor creatures that we are, are made honorable by God, the very least thing we can do is to honor Him in return. This is the highest honor that God can put upon us, that *He fixes His love upon us*—“Thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” Drink in that nectar if you can. I cannot preach about it. I always feel as if, when I get to that theme, I must just sit down and think over this great wonder, that *God loves me*! “I have loved thee—I, the Great, the infinite JEHOVAH, have loved you.” Well, then, the very least thing we can do is to honor with our whole heart and soul Him who has so greatly honored us.

Now, beloved, *have you honored God*? He says in our text, “Neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices.” Have you honored God by your lives, dear brethren? Have you honored God by your confidence in Him? Have you honored God by your patience? Have you honored God by defending His truth when it has been assailed? Have you honored God by speaking to poor sinners about Him? Are you trying every day to honor Him? Surely, it is the very least thing we can do who have been—

“Chosen of Him ere time began,”

and then redeemed with the heart's blood of the Son of the Highest.

It is the least we can do, to make every faculty we possess subordinate to this end of honoring and glorifying God. It is for this He has created us, for this He has called us, for this He has redeemed us, for this He has sanctified us. Therefore, let us set about it at once, and think and plan within our hearts what we can do for the glory and honor of Him who has redeemed us unto Himself.

The Lord bless this message to all here present, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 43:1-7; 21-28; 44:1-5

Isaiah 43:1. *But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

“Fear not,” is a command of God and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, “Fear not,” and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away.

“Fear not: for I have redeemed thee.” That is a good reason why we should never fear again. Redemption is a well of consolation and the redeemed of the Lord have nothing whatever to fear.

2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;*

The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:*

The godly have special help in their times of deepest trouble.

2. *When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned;*

The godly are the subjects of miracles of mercy in seasons of greatest distress.

2. *Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for where God is, all is safe. “Thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

3. *For I am the LORD thy God,*

This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing. Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was—“For I am JEHOVAH, thy God,”

3-4. *The Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*

All that God has given, if it were not enough, He would still add to it. He has redeemed us, so there is no need of more, but if there were, God would go through with it even to the end.

5. *Fear not: for I am with thee:*

This is the second time that the blessed words, “Fear not,” ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts. “Fear not, for I am with thee.” The Lord seems to say to each troubled believer, “My honor is pledged to secure your safety, all My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yea, I am, Myself, with you. Wherefore fear not.”

5-7. *I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

Whatever happens, God will be with His church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, even every one that is called by His name.

7. *For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

And God will be glorified in His people, the object of their creation is the glory of their God, and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord's good time.

Now I want you to notice the other side of the question. God says, in the twenty-first verse,—

21. *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. But—*

A sorrowful “but” and the strain sinks from a triumphant shout to a doleful lamentation. “But”—

22. *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

How sad it is that those who have been loved so much should make such a shameful return for it all!

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings;*

No kids of the goats, or lambs from the fold,

23. *Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have not been a cruel taskmaster, or tyrant, demanding of you more than you could give.”

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money,*

“No calamus has sent forth its perfume from My altar,”

24. *Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

These are the people whom God had loved so long and so well, those upon whom He had set His unchanging affection. Yet they acted shamefully. What will follow upon such conduct as this? Their swift destruction? No. Listen to the Lord's gracious message,

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Here is a great wave of mercy washing away everything that could bear witness against the people of God.

26-28. *Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah 44:1-5. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

There are different ways of making the same profession of attachment to the Lord. All do not acknowledge in the same way their faith in God, but it is a great blessing when our offspring do acknowledge it. Let us end our reading with that sweet blessing upon our children—“I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

May it come to pass in all our families, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—732, 742, 640

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